

## CECIL WILLIAMS IN AFRICA

In early February of this year, Cecil Williams spent two weeks in Lagos, Nigeria as a guest of the Nigerian government. He was one of 500 Americans and 14,500 people from 61 other countries. All were experts in some form of creative activity or performing art, including dancing, writing, poetry, sculptors, and acrobats. There was even an aboriginal boomerang thrower from Australia. Cecil's speciality, of course, was playing the guitar and singing western country songs of his own composition.



*Williams*

This was all a part of FESTAC, the Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture. Each participating country provided air fare for its delegates; Nigeria undertook to feed, house, transport, and provide other essential services for the more than 15,000 guests. To do this a permanent village was erected including eleven dining halls. Transportation was provided by a brand new fleet of diesel-powered air conditioned buses.

Cecil tells of his arrival in Lagos: "... the plane doors opened and the 'welcoming committee', about 1,000 Nigerian men, women and children, let go with a thunderous round of applause followed by a tremendous Hurray! Hurray! Hurray! Then they began chanting 'Welcome, welcome, welcome home brothers and sisters, welcome home.' Never in my life have I experienced anything quite as exciting, exhilarating, and heart warming. We cheered back."

Each artist or group gave at least one performance. Cecil's big show was at the National Sport Theater where he held forth for an hour entertaining more than a thou-

sand people plus a TV audience. Nigeria, with some 70 million people, is about the size of England, and extends from 4° north of the equator to 14°. It consists of 19 states with a centrally located capitol territory. English is the official language; Islamic is the predominant religion in the north, with Christianity in the south. The bus drivers, according to Cecil, are real thrillers, driving "Texas style" (one hand on the wheel, one on the horn, and a foot on the accelerator). He notes, with a big, reminiscent smile, that beer appears to be the national beverage.

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